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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [PGOV](#) [PNUC](#) [JA](#)
SUBJECT: (S) JAPAN SEEKS ASSURANCES ON EXTENDED DETERRENCE

Classified By: Ambassador J. Thomas Schieffer, Reasons: 1.4 (B/D)

¶1. (S/NF) Summary: During April 11-12 meetings with visiting P/DASD (Asia Pacific) Jim Shinn, Japanese officials asked the USG to publicly and privately reiterate its commitment to defend Japan, including with nuclear weapons. Ministry of Defense (MOD) Vice Minister Takemasa Moriya said that DPRK nuclear and missile tests have given the Japanese public a sense of real threat for the first time. Moriya attributed Japanese questions about the U.S. nuclear umbrella to unease with the direction of U.S. North Korea policy. MOFA and MOD officials praised Secretary Rice's October reassurances that the U.S. would respond with all means available should Japan be attacked. Nevertheless, they expressed frustration that this message has not been repeated in other channels. Japanese officials asked the U.S. to use the upcoming Summit meeting and bilateral military planning activities to reinforce the U.S. commitment. Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuhisa Shiozaki acknowledged Japan's concerns about being left isolated in the Six-Party Talks process, but said that the general public has not made a connection with extended deterrence. End Summary.

Seeking Affirmation

¶2. (S/NF) Concerns over the validity of the U.S. nuclear umbrella were raised separately by MOD Vice Minister Moriya and senior working level MOFA and MOD officials during April 11-12 meetings with visiting P/DASD Jim Shinn. MOD Defense Policy Deputy Director General (DDG) Hironori Kanazawa and MOFA North American Affairs DDG Kazuyoshi Umemoto delivered a formal, and specific, request for U.S. action to Shinn on the margins of the April 11 Defense Policy Review Initiative (DPRI) Principals meeting.

¶3. (S/NF) Kanazawa said that in the wake of DPRK nuclear and missile test activities in 2006, the Japanese public is uneasy over how firm the U.S. commitment actually is. Kanazawa praised Secretary Rice's public affirmation on the U.S. nuclear umbrella in the immediate wake of the October, 2006 nuclear test. He expressed disappointment, however, that this message has not been repeated since that time, especially by U.S. military officials. While Japan does not require "details" on U.S. operational decisionmaking, Kanazawa said that Tokyo does expect policy-level officials to regularly acknowledge the U.S. willingness to employ its nuclear forces in Japan's defense. MOFA DDG Umemoto interjected that policy-level reassurances should be accompanied by closer consultations at the policy and

operational levels.

¶4. (S/NF) Kanazawa emphasized that the Japanese government seeks to maintain its current military force structure, but asserted that this posture can only be sustained if Japan can count on firm commitments from the U.S. on extended deterrence. He added that "loose talk" from politicians notwithstanding, Japan has no intention to pursue an indigenous conventional or nuclear strike capability.

A Growing Gap: In Perception or Interests?

¶5. (S/NF) In a separate meeting with P/DASD Shinn, MOD Administrative Vice Minister Moriya asserted that the Japanese public for the first time sees North Korea's nuclear and missile programs as a direct threat to Japan's national security and existence. The only way to address these fears, he continued, is to convince the public that the U.S. will defend Japan effectively. Moriya urged the U.S. to use both public venues, including the upcoming Summit meeting, and bilateral operational planning activities to convey "concrete" commitments to defend Japan against non-conventional threats. As an example, Moriya suggested that the U.S. specify Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD) assets, such as PAC-3 battalions and Aegis vessels, to be deployed to Japan in a crisis.

¶6. (S/NF) Moriya stated that Japanese unease about extended deterrence is linked to concerns over an apparent gap in priorities and perceptions regarding North Korea. U.S. gestures to showcase the strength of the alliance following the October, 2006 DPRK nuclear test greatly reassured the Japanese public, Moriya added. However, many in Japan were confused over the subsequent U.S. decision to "lift sanctions" on Pyongyang.

¶7. (S/NF) Moriya suggested that it was a change in the U.S. attitude, not Pyongyang's, that has facilitated progress in the Six-Party Talks. Moriya said that it appears to many in Japan that the sudden willingness to accommodate Pyongyang is related to the burden of military operations in Iraq. Moriya referred several times to recent testimony by Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Gen. Pace suggesting that deployments to Iraq have limited U.S. options to respond to provocations from North Korea.

Historical Parallels: Fmr. DefMin Nukaga's Views

¶8. (S/NF) Former Defense Minister Fukushima Nukaga told P/DASD Shinn that calls last autumn by senior ruling party leaders for a debate on possessing nuclear weapons were a predictable outcome of the DPRK nuclear test. Nukaga said that the U.S. should not be overly concerned about Japan's questions about nuclear use policy. Extended deterrence is obviously a fundamental aspect of the alliance and it is natural for Japan to seek clarity on U.S. intentions. While Japan is looking at new security roles for itself, Nukaga emphasized that obtaining nuclear weapons would undermine Tokyo's own security interests.

¶9. (S/NF) Nevertheless, Nukaga said that recent events have increased interest in developing independent defense capabilities. Nukaga drew a parallel between the current situation and 1964, when he asserted that then-Prime Minister Eisaku Sato informed the U.S. Ambassador of Japan's intention to go nuclear in response to China's first nuclear test. At the time, Nukaga said that the U.S. government urged Japan not to exercise the nuclear option and instead invest in helping the U.S. win the space race with the Soviet Union. Ultimately, the U.S. offered Japan access to rocket technologies in exchange for dropping its nuclear plans. Nukaga added, however, that the episode led Japan to embark on its own indigenous rocket fuel development program and spurred action on other bilateral issues, including Okinawa reversion.

¶10. (S/NF) In a separate meeting with P/DASD Shinn, Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuhisa Shiozaki underscored the Japanese government's deep unease about the direction of the current Six-Party Talks and risk that Japan could be left exposed. However, he said that so far at least, notions of extended nuclear deterrence do not seem to have been grasped by the general public. Shiozaki himself did not explicitly connect extended deterrence with North Korea strategy.

SCHIEFFER